

GOVERNOR'S WATER POLICY ADVISOR

To: Central Puget Sound Regional Water Initiative Participants and Interested Parties

From: Jim Waldo, Governor Locke's Water Policy Advisor

Date: October 15, 2002

Re: Central Puget Sound Regional Water Resources Strategy

The draft of the Central Puget Sound Regional Water Resources Strategy is enclosed for your review and comment. This draft Strategy is another step on the road to developing a comprehensive water management strategy for the Central Puget Sound (CPS) region. The Strategy provides a regional framework for coordinated State decision-making in cooperation with local governments, and with consultation and involvement by tribes and federal agencies. The Strategy provides policy guidance for cooperatively identifying and evaluating creative and adaptive means to manage water resources in the Central Puget Sound Region on a long term, sustainable basis.

This Strategy was developed with assistance from an interim working group who developed a "Straw Proposal" early this year. These individuals represent State agencies, water utilities, environmental interests and local governments in the Central Puget Sound Region. Three task groups were formed and worked throughout the summer to discuss issues and make water policy recommendations. The task group participants have not committed their constituencies to this Strategy, however they have provided important guidance and information concerning their perspectives and interests.

This Strategy incorporates the thinking, comments, suggestions and recommendations of the participants. Where the task groups reached consensus on particular policy recommendations, they were incorporated into the Strategy. Where the task groups did not reach consensus, the Core Team made the policy choices based on the discussions with the participants. Numerous tasks by additional task groups must be undertaken in the coming months and years to complete this work; the implementation schedule begins to identify those tasks and proposes a schedule for their completion.

The following features of the CPS Strategy are designed as improvements to future water resource management in the region:

Alignment of State Agencies:

Through this Strategy, the four State agencies that have responsibilities related to water resource management (Departments of Ecology, Health, Fish & Wildlife, and Community, Trade & Economic Development) will coordinate their work. Designated representatives from each

agency will form a new Central Puget Sound Team (CPS Team) who will advance the Vision and Goals of this Strategy. The State agencies will retain regulatory authority with respect to water resources, but the CPS Team will be directed to take a proactive role in fostering solutions to water resource challenges.

Enhanced Coordination Among Local Agencies:

While the Strategy is designed to coordinate State agencies, it also encourages greater coordination among local government and multi-stakeholder processes. Commitment and support by local governments to link water resource decision-making will be essential to the long-term success of this Strategy.

Stream Flow Protection and Enhancement:

The Strategy provides an enhanced focus on protecting stream flows. It acknowledges the importance of settlement patterns and wastewater practices, in addition to water supply, in altering hydrology and flow.

Build on Existing Efforts:

The Strategy recognizes the important and invaluable contributions of numerous local watershed and salmon recovery efforts. The Strategy will build on those where applicable, and will not add another layer of unnecessary process to hinder those processes.

Growth and Economic Vitality:

The Strategy recognizes the economic and environmental importance of meeting needs for growth as established by local governments through Growth Management processes.

Coordinated Water Resource Management:

The CPS Team is instructed to cooperate with local governments, tribes and planning processes to the greatest extent possible, focusing on enhancing the ability of both State and regional decision-makers to make sound water management decisions in a manner supporting the region's Vision and Goals. Within the next few months, a work group will begin to evaluate the potential for formalizing a Coordinated Water Resource Management component for this Strategy.

Tools:

An array of existing water management tools is identified; the CPS Team will be directed to use and package those tools in new and creative ways to help achieve the Strategy Vision and Goals.

Early Action and Pilot Projects:

Proposals have been received that may be initiated in 2003 to implement the Strategy. Those Early Action and Pilot Projects that meet the criteria in the Strategy and support the Strategy Vision and Goals will be referred to the CPS Team for consideration for expedited approval and funding.

Funding:

Funds will be sought through the federal and State budgeting process, and to the extent available, funding from within the region. At the State level, funding needs associated with implementation of the Strategy will include:

- New funding or re-directed staffing within the Departments of Ecology, Health, Fish & Wildlife, and Community, Trade & Economic Development to ensure their ability to carry out the assignments as outlined in the Strategy;
- Funding for specific State-led initiatives in the region, such as setting instream flows and a program to meet those flows, development of a regional drought management program, and improved water resource data-gathering and management; and
- New or re-directed federal and State grant and loan programs to support the CPS Strategy.

These are difficult and trying times. There is a temptation when facing such difficulties to lay aside the long-term welfare of our communities and deal only with what is necessary to get by in such difficult circumstances. Let us be resolved to meet our near term needs while continuing to move ahead on these vital long term issues that are of such significance to our future.

Many people have spent incalculable hours participating in the interim working group, task groups, work sessions and in consultation with the Core Team. The time and energy devoted to those efforts is both appreciated and reflected in this draft Strategy. This draft document outlines the work to be done over the coming months. We intend to build on this draft and add greater value to this effort through future steps. We seek your ideas and comments. Any ideas, proposals, or comments received by November 15 will be reviewed for incorporation into the final version of the Strategy to Governor Locke on December 15. Please send your comments and suggestions to Rob Caldwell via email (rcaldwell@gth-law.com) or by mail to my office in Olympia.